

His children observe: "Dad has a smile that would immediately tell all that he was happy to be in company with you. He enjoyed a good joke and always enjoyed a brewed cup of tea. 'Refreshing,' he would say. John was a gentleman, also a strong man, a man who exemplified the motto by which he lived: 'always faithful.' Our own father, his uncle, said of John, 'He knew how to be a man.'"

Born in 1925, John was a devoted son of Szezan and Mary. He was his parents' first and only born son and the eldest of 16 children, an American of Polish heritage. He grew up attending St. Stanislaus Church and Libbey High School in tough economic times. He knew struggle. He worked hard. He possessed the drive, inventiveness and skill for which Kaptur men are known. His kindness was rooted deeply in his early years when people survived by holding onto one another.

He valued family—to celebrate life and to weather the rough times. At 79, he was the patriarch of the Kaptur family.

John was a tot when Wall Street crashed in 1929 ushering in the Great Depression of the 1930s. No jobs were to be had. For people today, it is hard to describe how hard life was back then—before America had a minimum wage, before there was enough to eat for so many families, before there was Social Security and Medicare. That was the world into which John was born. He never forgot. But he always kept moving forward. He was so talented. He possessed the Kaptur man's physique—sturdy, square jawed, full of wanderlust, but steady, with a heart of gold so big his body could hardly contain it.

At 17, following in his father's footsteps, he enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps—the elite, special branch of the U.S. Armed Forces especially trained for amphibious assault. He served in the Pacific Theater during World War II—first training at Camp Le Jeune in New River, North Carolina. In September, 1942, he departed on a troopship out of San Diego as a member of the 3rd Marine Division for the Bougainville invasion of American Samoa. He contracted a mosquito borne illness in late 1943 after the Guadalcanal invasion. A natural leader, he rose in rank in the Corps and later in the Reserves from Private First Class, to Lance Corporal, to Corporal, to Sergeant, and Staff Sergeant. He served honorably 12 years in the Corps and Reserves. He was a patriot.

When I look at his beautiful family, I repeat the Marine Corps saying: "The marines have landed, and the situation is well in hand." John maintained a keen interest in world events and helped shape them. In his mid 30s, John married Rita Mominee. What a match this has been! Smiles, a house full of activity, travel, joy. Together, they raised a magnificent family: 4 boys—Stephen, Christopher, James, Kenneth—and finally a girl—Regina. What a blessing he was able to watch them grow up and flower into adulthood.

He enjoyed every minute. During his long life, he also experienced the Great Depression, World War II, the Korean War, Sputnik and the landing of the first man on the moon, the collapse of the Soviet Union, where his own father had served in Marine Corps in Vladivostok, and he ushered in the 21st century. All the while, John kept steady with his family and garden blooming, a man of quiet strength, a gentleman, good, and kind. To ease the sorrow, we should think about what

each of us can do in his name, as a living prayer. For he will come to us now in a new way, not on our time but on his time. His children, through Regina, say about him:

"Dad was proud to be Catholic and to have served in the United States Marine Corps. His talents were many." After working nearly four decades in industrial production planning at Dura Corp. and later, retiring from Chrysler-Jeep as a planner in the engineering division, he quickly went out to do plumbing. "The love of people and good conversation made me want to do it," he said. He always worked a hard day supporting his large family.

He most loved his family. He celebrated his 45th wedding anniversary not long ago with his wife, Rita, along with his family. What a strong and devoted spouse Rita has been. Jim and Christine shared their home for that event, just as they did for the wake after his Christian burial. Dad was very proud of Jim's accomplishments as a Paramedic/Toledo Firefighter and the perseverance he has to move up. He found great comfort in his knowledge. He would always take a nap in the afternoon so he could stay up to welcome Ken home from a hard day's work, and talk about the Lottery. When the day came to around 3 o'clock he would look for Chris to come by and have some good conversation. For Steve, he was very thankful for the skills it took to fix his car or use his trailer. As he was fathering all these boys, he became so very proud of their hard work and perseverance on a job. Regina knows her dad is proud of her accomplishments and the love, care, and comfort she had for him in his time of need. "Dad taught me respect, compassion, diplomacy, perseverance, and the ability to know people and to have the psychology of life. Most of all, he taught me to love a human being, no matter if they were challenged or not."

Then there are the grandchildren: He loved each and every one of them—Nicole, Michael, Cassandra, Ashley, Brittany, Jacob, Lucas. Whether John wanted to play hockey in the driveway, or bump the tree with the tire swing, or pick up sticks in the yard, or take a walk to the grapes, or even around the block. He may have just wanted a conversation with you, he loved you all. And I might add, our last conversation, just a few days ago, was about getting together with the grandchildren for dinner when he was feeling better.

And the grandchildren couldn't have come without the loving daughters-in-law and son-in-law he gained: Renee, Christine and Jeff.

Regina writes: "I was very glad to have spent the time with Dad these past few months and through all his surgeries. I would not have wanted it any other way. So much value was built in the quality time we had. He recalled everyone in the present and in the past. Never was a cross word said. His words were always very kind. Dad had the best doctors and they always took our phone calls without hesitation and went beyond to meet our needs. Dad was always open to their suggestions that would help him. He had told the doctors: 'Let's do it—I am a patient man.' With tears in my eyes, I watched as God wrapped his arms around Dad and said to him, 'My precious child, come with me. You surely were a treasure on this earth, but now I need you in Heaven.' So God reached out and showed him the bright light, and said, 'I will reunite you all again some day.' With tears in all of our eyes we will meet him again in heaven where

he will greet each one of us with a smile and say, 'It's great to see you.' 'Thank you for coming' 'Can I get you a cup of tea, or perhaps a Coop e'Kava and cookie?'"

POEM

Because you went first and I remain,
To walk the road alone.
I live in memories garden, Dear,
With happy days we've known.
In Spring I wait for roses red,
When faded, the lilacs blue.
In early Fall when brown leaves fall
I'll catch a glimpse of you.
Because you went first and I remain,
For battles to be fought.
Each thing you touched along the way
Is now a hallowed spot.
I hear your voice, I see your smile,
Tho blindly I now grope.
The memory of your helping hand
Now buoys me on with hope.
Because you went first and I remain,
One thing I'll have to do:
Walk slowly down that long long path,
For soon I'll follow you,
I want to know each step you took,
So I may take the same,
For some day down that lonely road,
You'll hear me call your name.

CONGRATULATING THE CUB
SCOUTS, BOY SCOUTS, AND GIRL
SCOUTS OF DODGE ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL IN EAST AMHERST, NY

HON. THOMAS M. REYNOLDS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 21, 2004

Mr. REYNOLDS. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise to recognize the Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts from Dodge Elementary School in East Amherst, New York, for having been chosen to receive the President's Environmental Youth Award.

In 2002, the Dodge Elementary Scouts began a wetland enhancement project in the Town of East Amherst. The project, now in its third year, has been a tremendous success, as is evidenced by the children being selected to receive the President's Environmental Youth Award. The project not only aids the environment and beautifies the Town, but also benefits the Scouts by teaching them the ideals of conservation and community service.

In the project's first year, the group planted four hundred tree seedlings around a one-acre pond in the town. Bird boxes were also placed around the pond for further wetland habitat enhancement. In 2003, these young men and women planted over eight hundred trees. The work was done as part of Amherst's Arbor Day celebrations. In that single day, the Scouts planted seven hundred and eighty seedlings, as well as fifty weeping willows, black willows, and green ash trees, varying from five to eight feet in height. It was a remarkable effort. This year, the Scouts have already placed several dozen bird boxes, bat boxes, and duck boxes, and have scheduled another tree-planting day for April 25th.

Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, April 22nd, members of the Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts from Dodge Elementary School will be at the White House to be honored by President Bush as recipients of the President's Environmental Youth Award, and I ask that this House join me in congratulating them on this well-deserved award.